

# San Francisco Chronicle

## EDITORIAL

### Firebombing shows the danger of domestic terror

For all of the national chatter that persists about international terrorists striking the United States, this weekend's firebombings in Santa Cruz offered us a frightening reminder that our greatest dangers may be right here at home.

Thankfully, no one was hurt in Saturday morning's firebombs. David Feldheim, a UC Santa Cruz biologist, and his young family escaped an ignition at their own home by climbing down a fire ladder. And there was no one in the Volvo station wagon that was destroyed by a firebomb around the same time. But the perennial nature of these attacks on scientists who conduct animal experiments, and the increasing sophistication of the devices being used to attack them, speak to catastrophes in the making. But where is the outrage, and where are the wars to protect scientists like Feldheim?

We're not talking about real, actual wars - we've got enough of those already. But Feldheim was right to say that the citizens of Santa Cruz and the city's elected officials need to "step up" and condemn this sort of violence. We would expand the scope to say that all citizens and elected officials need to be emphatic in saying that this is unacceptable and step up their willingness to defend scientists struggling to do their research.

For example, why didn't the Santa Cruz coffee shop remove the threatening animal-rights pamphlet that listed the names and addresses of 13 researchers - and call the police? Why can't Internet service providers threaten those who post threats, bomb recipes, and information about animal researchers with cessation of their services - and then follow through with that threat? And where are the moderate voices in the animal-rights community, when they're needed to straighten out someone like Dr. Jerry Vlasak of the Animal Liberation Front, who didn't claim responsibility for the attacks but called them "necessary?"

If these seem like drastic maneuvers, think again: This country has taken far more invasive steps in its "war on terror," with less productive ends and far less justifiable means. Here what's at stake is the ability of scientists to do their jobs - and the ability of the rest of us to benefit from their work. Quietly, for many years now scientists have been abandoning their research in response to threats and bombs. These kinds of attacks place public health at risk in every way imaginable. The sooner we take steps to protect our scientists, the sooner we'll realize we're also protecting ourselves.

— San Francisco Chronicle, August 5, 2008